

**DEED / VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES**  
**VRS COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2015—9:00 AM—3:00 PM**  
**VRS WOODBURY OFFICE / HUDSON CONFERENCE ROOM**

## **SESSION NOTES:**

### **Committee Objective**

The purpose of the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee is to provide strategic advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on topics and issues affecting the mutual provision of DEED/VRS and CRP/LUV services to Minnesotans with disabilities. Our efforts to understand issues and to work collaboratively will build and nurture the capacity of Minnesota's rehabilitation community to advance the employment, independent living and community integration of Minnesotans with disabilities.

Specifically, the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee will:

- Represent the perspectives and interests of CRP/LUVs in advancing rehabilitation and employment issues while fostering dialogue and engagement on critical issues throughout the greater rehabilitation community
- Promote innovative service practices to accelerate the adoption of best practices at a systems level that fosters equitable access to quality services on a statewide basis
- Provide strategic level advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on matters affecting CRP/LUVs
- Identify key topics and issues affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS
- Consider input from subject matter experts in issues affecting economic development, state demographics / population trends, and promising practices
- Engage in active reflection, spirited discussion and strategic dialogue on critical topics affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS services to persons with disabilities in Minnesota
- Provide a forum for the review and discussion of critical VRS and CRP service delivery topics including, but not limited to: current service delivery practices; new and emerging service needs; identifying best practices; and the consideration of statewide service needs and resources

**2015 Community Partner Members** (listed alphabetically): Heather Deutschlaender, Wendy DeVore, Kelly Dilger, Jeremy Gurney, Josh Howie, Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Dan Meyers, Nick Monson, Julie Peterschick, Robert Reedy and Lynn Vincent

**VRS Members:** Jay Hancock and Lori Thorpe

**Sponsor:** Kim Peck, VRS Director

**Co-leaders:** Chris McVey and Jan Thompson

**Facilitator:** Holly Johnson

**2015 Schedule:** Feb 27, Mar 27, Apr 24, May 29, Sep 25, Oct 23, and Dec 4.

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**February 27, 2015 Session Objectives:**

- Welcome and introduction of our new 2015-2017 advisory committee members
- Review and refinement of the draft 2015 VRS CRP Advisory Committee charter
- Gather advisory perspectives on the important forces and trends impacting the work of the greater Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation community as groundwork for identification and prioritization of the committee's strategic discussion topics for 2015
- Discussion on the topic of co-design and delivery of Regional Partner Meetings
- Provide a conduit for sharing relevant, important and timely updates and information for the benefit of vocational rehabilitation community and consumers

**February 27 2015 Attendees** (*listed alphabetically*): Heather Deutschlaender, Wendy DeVore, Kelly Dilger, Jeremy Gurney, Jay Hancock, Josh Howie, Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Dan Meyers, Nick Monson, Chris McVey, Kim Peck, Julie Peterschick, Jan Thompson, Lori Thorpe and Lynn Vincent

**Not in attendance:** Robert Reedy

**Facilitator:** Holly Johnson

**Agenda Topics:**

1. Welcome / Overview
2. Charting Our Course for 2015
3. What Do We See: Identifying the Important Strategic Drivers of Change in Employment Services for the Vocational Rehabilitation Community
4. Advisory Dialogue: Recreating the Regional Partners Meeting Together
5. Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics
6. Wrap Up/Adjourn @ 3pm

**Meeting Highlights:**

- The committee identified and discussed the significant change forces impacting Employment Services and Vocational Rehabilitation community in Minnesota including WIOA and the Supreme Court's Olmstead Decision/Minnesota Olmstead Plan.
- The committee expressed enthusiasm for bringing back and updating a model for regional partnership meetings that would be co-designed and co-led by VRS and CRP partners around the state.

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**Next Steps:**

- **DOCUMENT SESSION NOTES:** The facilitator will document the session notes for VRS Co-leadership review and approval for distribution to key audiences including the CRP Advisory Committee, VRS, and CRP/LUV partners.
- **CRP ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2015 CHARTER:** Holly Johnson will incorporate committee inputs from the environmental scanning exercise into the draft 2015 "Scope: Strategic Topics" section for review and refinement at the March meeting.
- **REGIONAL MEETINGS DESIGN WORK:** Chris McVey will work with the VRS Leadership Team and CRP members of the Advisory to develop preliminary designs for regional meetings in 2015.
- **NEXT MEETING:** Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup>

**Welcome and Opening**

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The committee opened with a welcome by co-leads Chris McVey and Jan Thompson.

The committee leaders welcomed four new members to the 2015 VRS CRP Advisory Committee as follows:

1. Wendy DeVore, Career Ventures (Metro Region)
2. Kelly Dilger, Options (Northern Region)
3. Nick Monson, Functional Industries (South and Central Region)
4. Lynn Vincent, Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute (Metro Region)

The new cohort has been selected for the membership term of 2015-2017. With 12 CRP representatives on the committee, there are three cohorts of four representatives each. Each cohort serves a three year term in a staggered progression in order to balance new membership with committee continuity over time. There is one VRS RAM representative (Lori Thorpe) and one VRS Regional Manager (Jay Hancock) appointed to the committee.

**Charting Our Course for 2015**

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Committee facilitator Holly Johnson reviewed the components of a draft 2015 VRS CRP Advisory Committee charter as part of the annual review and update process. The charter provides a concise description of the committee's purpose along with key elements including membership, scope, team process guidelines, roles, communication plan and external dependencies. Each year the committee is asked to review their charter and make any relevant updates and edits prior to signifying their commitment for the year through signatures to the approved charter.

Holly asked that committee members review the entire charter and provide any suggested edits to her prior to the next meeting. Members will be provided an updated charter incorporating any edits at the March meeting with a goal of finalizing of the charter content and securing 2015 membership commitment signatures.

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#### Important Strategic Drivers of Change in Employment Services for the Vocational Rehabilitation Community

The CRP Advisory Committee completed an environmental scanning exercise to identify important trends impacting the VR Community in four categories: 1. what is current, 2. what is disappearing, 3. what's emerging, and 4. what is on the edge from a Vocational Rehabilitation community perspective through the three 'lens' of economic, organizational and cultural perspectives. Responses are summarized as follows:

	Current/Typical	Disappearing	Emerging	Edge
<b><u>Economic:</u></b> <i>Work, Resources, Products, Services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources are limited</li> <li>Our VR ideals are high</li> <li>Limited funds are impacting eligibility for services with 3 of 4 categories closed</li> <li>We offer a continuum of employment services including Performance Based Agreements (PBA), IPS, Center Based Employment (CBE), Day Training and Habilitation (DTH), Community Employment (CE), and Supported Employment (SE).</li> <li>There are limited options for services in some areas e.g. rural</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some employment options and job carving are going away such as single task jobs, single skills that were offered in the past</li> <li>Vocational rehabilitation assessments for in-house or Center based employment are not happening</li> <li>Funding from the counties, SEED dollars e.g. Dakota</li> <li>Funding for traditional/large enclaves is reduced</li> <li>There is limited funding for sheltered work options</li> <li>Extended Employment (EE) dollars are shifting from non-competitive Center Based Employment (CBE) to more competitive Supported Employment (SE) services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Olmstead Plan</li> <li>An increased focus on rapid engagement of services and working to stay connected with consumer</li> <li>Person centered planning</li> <li>Focus on transition youth age as early as 14 yrs old</li> <li>More resource guarding as advocacy groups compete for limited dollars needed to 'live into' Olmstead and WIOA requirements. Creates increased stress on demand for resources to meet the needs and requirements</li> <li>Seeing greater incentive for collaboration within the limited funding and policy environment to address the increased requirements</li> <li>More employers utilizing temp agencies which are very difficult for our VR consumers to navigate</li> <li>DISCOVERY model of assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for actual elimination of subminimum wage certificate</li> <li>Focus on finding ways to transform public benefits to reduce the degree of disincentives to work</li> <li>Diminishing public resources - operating with assumptions of steady or reduced funding levels going forward</li> <li>Technologies have potential to allow more people to work from home than ever before, people can get there virtually</li> <li>Jobs are changing dramatically; titles unknown for the future</li> <li>Seeing service and lower tech manufacturing industries reductions</li> </ul>

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	Current/Typical	Disappearing	Emerging	Edge
<b><u>Organizational:</u></b> <i>Policies, Structures, Systems, Connection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different levels of government and agencies still operating within 'silos' with challenges in flexibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sheltered workshops - people and policies are moving towards more competitive employment services</li> <li>Special minimum wage use is disappearing</li> <li>There is a lack of affordable housing for individuals served; difficulty to find in many areas</li> <li>Diminishing transportation options particularly in Greater MN e.g. DARTS losing their license and ceasing to exist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment First philosophy</li> <li>There is a skills gap between employers' needs and what the workforce can currently offer</li> <li>Changing technology available for both consumers and providers</li> <li>Opportunity to assist employers in meeting the 503 requirement for employers with federal contracts to specifically hire people with disabilities (within Rehab Act)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closing of center based services/options</li> <li>Increasing assistive technologies</li> <li>Increasing natural supports</li> <li>Universal design of programs is up front and understood rather than added later as an after thought</li> <li>Changes in transportation options: some diminish, new options may be added e.g. self driving cars</li> </ul>
<b><u>Cultural:</u></b> <i>History, Values, Story, Attitude, Images</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VR Community widely held belief that people with disabilities can work and services are person-centered</li> <li>There is a full range of choice within the models</li> <li>Public expectations for people with disabilities are still generally low</li> <li>Teams are choosing services based on convenience and safety factors for consumers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trend of competition among CRPS has been replaced with more collaboration and community</li> <li>Employers are more willing to hire people with disabilities due to several factors including improved economy and they are seeing the benefits of what people with disabilities bring to the jobs and their organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the coordinated team approach to services e.g. Next Generation Placement pilot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The narrative of people with disabilities still has a long way to go towards tapping the full potential of what is possible</li> </ul>

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### **Advisory Dialogue: Recreating the Regional Partners Meeting Together**

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Chris McVey, VRS Director of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships provided a brief overview of the background and history of the regional partners meeting. Chris's predecessor in Partnerships, David Sherwood-Gabrielson is now the Director of DEED Olmstead Plan Implementation. David organized and led the regional partners meetings for many years and VRS has long recognized the needs of the community for gathering folks together however during the past few years, there have not been regional meetings for a number of reasons including significant resource constraints.

Given the current context of continued and increasing resource issues and the significant volume of topics that need to be shared within the local, regional and state levels, Chris stated that VRS would like to engage the CRP Advisory in recreating the regional partners meetings together. VRS local levels have benefited from the community building 'on the ground' thanks in large part to the emergence of 16 local placement partnerships around the state. However there is a renewed interest in having regional opportunities to address issues and opportunities that span beyond local placement collaboration efforts.

The focus of the advisory dialogue is to address questions around what do we want to build and what do we want regional partners meetings to look like if we bring them back. Kim Peck believes the next iteration should involve shared responsibilities among VRS and CRPs around what the agenda is, how we convene, and how we share information. While the CRP Advisory Committee represents an important avenue for community conversation, we also need to develop other options to enlarge that community conversation and to do more to get the word out beyond just the advisory membership.

Chris added that she would also like to move from the previous format where VRS was largely providing a "download" of information sharing three times across the state to a more engaged process of joint preparation and information sharing among the VR community members. She also shared that it may make sense that with different things going on in different parts of the state that the content for each regional might include both 'standard' and 'customized' topics based on what the region deems most relevant.

As preface to opening the dialogue, Chris asked the advisory to share their ideas on how we can move forward together in building the community. She challenged the committee by asking "How can we pull in the whole community to a greater degree than we ever have before?" While VRS as the state designated unit is committed to fulfilling its 'convener' role, we believe Minnesota is best served when the larger vocational rehabilitation community is involved in serving the individuals and communities across our state.

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Next, the facilitator gathered responses from the committee members to the session preparation questions. The responses are summarized as follows:

***VRS CRP Advisory Committee input on VRS/CRP Regional meetings in 2015:***

***i. What might the meetings look like?***

- **Frequency:** Recommend meetings occur twice a year; once a year is not enough given everything that's going on and four times a year is too much to plan.
- **Technology:** Actively pursue the use of technologies to supplement access for those who cannot attend in person but might be able to join remotely e.g. client meetings that day, etc.
  - ✓ suggestion for videoconferencing capabilities - visuals really help to keep people engaged rather than just listening/participating by phone alone
  - ✓ Can we record the meeting content? Opportunity to take back some of the topics to share with others
  - ✓ We'll need help finding locations that have technologies to leverage
- **Location:**
  - ✓ Given the broad geographic expanse of the northern region, what about holding the meeting someplace like Grand Rapids as middle point?
  - ✓ How about alternating between the northeast and the northwest, with one in each location between the spring and fall regional meetings each year?
  - ✓ How about looking at combining different teams e.g. Jeri Werner & Lori Thorpe's teams and providers in those areas?
  - ✓ Metro regional partners meeting should be one big metro wide meeting otherwise it is tough for providers who serve in both east and west metro to choose which meeting to attend
- **Timing:**
  - ✓ How about connecting the regional meetings to coincide with MRA's meetings; leveraging meetings where providers are already planning to meet?
- **Approach:**
  - ✓ What about looking at creating meeting breakouts for more urban and more rural service providers to provide opportunities for each group to talk about shared issues and opportunities?

***ii. What are your thoughts on keys for success?***

- **Geographic considerations** for locations for northern and south/central regions
- **The right mix of topics and locations** e.g. criminal backgrounds topic

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- **Preparation to increase benefits of the time together** such as have talking points before the meeting e.g. 'Session Prep' similar to what we do for the CRP Advisory Committee
- **Being mindful of who should attend these meetings** given budget challenges
- **Snacks and treats are a must!**
- **Finding ways to mix up the groups;** seating 'assignments' to help with introductions and relationship building
- **Distributing materials/references** for the benefit of other providers/staff who are unable to attend to increase the sharing of good information and best practices
- **Including 'Unscheduled time' to catch people 'offline'** we know that important conversations and connections occur during these rare opportunities

**iii. What do we want to learn together at these meetings?**

- There needs to be value in our time together - it's not just coming together to come together
- There is **so much going on e.g. WIOA, EE rule, Olmstead** - that regional partners meetings can offer a place to talk about the changes, allay concerns and provide good information and updates **essential for helping our community to understand, absorb and process the changes**
- Great opportunity to **share process and practices that are successful to accelerate innovative services throughout the state**

**iv. What are your hopes for what these meetings can accomplish for our state's vocational rehabilitation community?**

- That these meetings will provide **opportunities to meet the key VRS staff that providers talk with over the phone - face to face.** Always helpful to have a face with the name and to **build working relationships through personal interaction that strengthen our work together long after the meetings take place**
- **Transparency and unified messaging statewide**
- **Building trust and collaboration** - meetings are where I meet colleagues and how we build networks to contact with questions/bounce ideas off
- **Opportunities to share issues/concerns without fear and in the best interest of resolving it together for the benefit of consumers**

**Next steps following the advisory dialogue:**

1. Chris will utilize the input provided to develop a plan for 2015 regional partners meetings and continue to engage the CRP Advisory Committee in the process.
2. Advisory members are encouraged to proactively offer potential options for meeting locations, technologies, etc. as the development of the meetings ramps up.



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## Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics

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### ❖ CRP updates:

- Dan Meyers
  - The **Opportunity Partners and RISE** partnership has created the 'Employment Cooperative' with a new vision and mission statement. The focus of the Employment Cooperative is on the DTH Day Services population - and engages placement folks who work with this population. The cooperative is based on the success of the local placement partnership model.
    - ◆ **Vision** – Our vision is for a world where meaningful work is available to all
    - ◆ **Mission** – The mission of the Employment Cooperative is to collaborate to increase meaningful work for people with disabilities
  - Opportunity Partners had 2 staff named as ARRM Care Award winners in the state. There were a total of 112 nominees this year. Organizations can nominate up to 2% of their staff for consideration. The award recognizes direct service excellence.
- Julie Peterschick
  - **Productive Alternatives** has hired a staff trainer who will begin work with an emphasis on interpreting 245D and core agency training and then branch out to other topics such as mental health and documentation requirements.
- Amanda Jensen-Stahl
  - **Goodwill Easter Seals** is hosting our annual Participant of the Year celebration on March 11th at our Fairview Office. One of three participants being honored is an IPS client and we're thrilled to recognize her accomplishments. She spoke to the SRC.
  - Working Well Mental Health clinic is growing in St Cloud. We have moved the clinic out of retail space to their own location which is conducive to good therapy.
  - We are launching a new training program on computer literacy at the Sons of Norway location in the Uptown area. The initial program offering is a free 3 weeks course for basic computer skills. We hope to offer it monthly. The program is expected to become part of a series down the road but we are testing it out at this point. If you have people interested in the free initial program contact Amanda.
  - Our Fairbault store is targeted for March opening
  - March 12<sup>th</sup> is "Mental Health Day on the Hill", the event is organized by NAMI and the Mental Health Legislative network. Contact Amanda for more information.
- Josh Howie
  - **Trillium Works** has moved into their new offices. Things are taking off again and we're excited to be expanding our services in the community.

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- Heather Deutschlaender -
  - **ProAct Inc.** is preparing for a CARF monitoring visit in April which will coincide with MRA this year
  - Heather's recent promotion includes added employment responsibilities for Supported Employment (SE), Extended Employment (EE), VR, and 245D.
  - ProAct has added a new job developer that will be going through Placement 101 on March 10-11<sup>th</sup>.
  - Pepsi is holding a training at ProAct for soft skills. Interested folks can contact Heather for more information.
  - Community assessments are booming and we are currently booked through May. We're looking at additional staff to help manage the demand.
- Lynn Vincent
  - **Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute** has hired someone to focus on the Extended Employment (EE) program. Mary Carter is phenomenal and we're very excited about her addition to the team.
- Nick Monson
  - **Functional Industries** is in a newly remodeled and addition to their building that combines allows for transition, mental health, and general VR services all under one roof. In Buffalo.
  - We have seen a large increase in job shadowing referrals from VR for students still in school and are adding staff to help cover the need.
- Wendy DeVore
  - **Career Ventures** is headed to Jamaica to meet with a school for the deaf, a school for the blind, and the equivalent of a CRP, to set up potential opportunities for students for international experience.
  - March 4<sup>th</sup> is a lobby day for the Deaf hosted by the Minnesota Commission of Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The Lobby Day is focused on how to speak to legislators, understanding bills being proposed and providing opportunities to speak with legislators. See website for more information.
- Jeremy Gurney
  - **Opportunity Services** is opening a new office in Olmstead county in the city of Byron. We are breaking ground with the spring thaw and planning on opening for service by end of the year. The office will support the range of services from Day Training and Habilitation (DTH) to Supported Employment (SE) and will serve both Dodge and Byron counties. Olmstead is looking for expanded services to help address the Rochester boom.

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❖ **DEED/VRS updates:**

- Jan Thompson, VRS Field Director
  - Statewide Caseload Data from 10/01/2014 to 02/27/2015:
    - 3,296 applications, 3,414 accepted for services (some of those may be on the waitlist), 2,166 new plans written. 136 people are on the waiting list. We're excited to share that five months into fiscal year we have 1,453 employment outcomes, about 50% of our FFY 2015 outcomes goal of 2,894.
    - Last year (FFY2014) we had a total of 3,613 people with job search services. To date we have already provided 3,050 people with those same services. System wide we are serving 12,345 persons with disabilities from application to post employment.
  - VRS is experiencing three RAM position retirements: Tom Anderson's position will be filled by Randa Lundmark, Kris Tone's position has been filled by Mimi Schafer. Steve Jacobs' position (retiring in April) has yet to be interviewed. RAMs successors will continue to strengthen clinical supervision.
- Chris McVey, VRS Director of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships
  - VRS has just finished reviewing the results of the first year of piloting the Next Generation Placement process at five different sites around the state. The pilot keys included a focus on coordinated team approach and dedicated communication points e.g. every 60 days until starting their jobs. At the pilot report out meetings in November and December 2014, we shared the results thus far and provided each pilot site to provide feedback/input on what's working and offer areas for improvement. Overall results for the first year of the pilot process are very encouraging with a ~13% improvement in outcomes over non-pilot locations utilizing the traditional PBA process. During that same time period, in non-pilot locations we saw a bit of a decrease overall statewide. As a result of the pilot review and evaluation, we are asking pilot sites to continue while adding some refinements based on the pilot report out meetings. During the first twelve months, only 25% of those in pilot process have completed the full process so we want to continue the pilot to see more people move through the full cycle to validate the initial positive results. We'll continue to keep you updated as we evaluate the pilots for statewide expansion down the road.
  - We are also ramping up for participation in the SGA project administered and supported by ICI institute. The study is testing a coordinated team approach for rapid engagement with consumers that also includes providing consumers with benefits information in an effort to help reduce the number of people reliant on disability benefits. Kentucky will begin the study in April. Minnesota is anticipated to begin in late May/early June with a third state participating in the study yet to be determined. Half of VRS offices (8 teams) will use the protocol and other half will be part of the control group. The rapid engagement expectation means that within 7 days of application, consumers

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are meeting with a counselor, a placement professional and a CWIC certified work incentive coordinator who is providing information up front before the employment plan is written. Minnesota is receiving 12 month research project funding to support this work. Much of the funds are expected to be directed towards staffing CWIC resources and CRPs to help serve the SSDI clients in the 'treatment' teams. The ultimate goal of the study is to test the ICI model to see if and how it works in securing employment outcomes while reducing the number of individuals on Social Security Disability Income.

**Important Messages for the Greater Vocational Rehabilitation Community:**

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- In anticipation of 2015, the CRP Advisory Committee is committed to continuing the important and strategic work on the policies and program topics that impact employment services for individuals with disabilities in Minnesota. We believe some of the primary forces for change on our system this year will include the Olmstead Plan, Informed Choice, The Minnesota Employment First Policy and the new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). These drivers will impact not only the work of VRS and CRPs/LUVs but also key system partners including counties, schools and other impacted state agencies such as the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education.
- VRS in its role as convener of Minnesota's vocational rehabilitation community is committed to sharing what we know as we continue to learn more and working with our system partners to figure out how we can make the transformations necessary to meet the combined requirements of key legislation affecting the employment services work we all do on behalf of Minnesotans with disabilities.
- As part of the ongoing community building effort, we are looking at renewing and redesigning the Regional Partners meetings around the state to help share and process information as it becomes available to share as well as to work together in developing effective ways to adapt to meet the state and federal expectations for services that enhance competitive employment in the most integrated settings possible for individuals with disabilities while minimizing the confusion and disruption that system changes often bring during the transition period.
- We know that many people and organizations are understandably nervous and/or fearful about what the changes might mean for them. Through our work together and as individuals committed to Minnesota's vocational rehabilitation community, we seek to help reduce any fear and misinformation generated as part of the transition being spurred by the numerous, concurrent policy and regulatory requirements impacting our communities. We renew our belief in benefit of engaging in an ongoing process of open, thoughtful conversations to work through all the legislation and help build a path to the future.